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The denial of the very existence of Islamophobia/anti-Muslim racism/anti-Muslim hate crime in Europe by many demonstrates the need for an appropriate effort and political will to tackle this normalized racism and its manifestations that are deeply entrenched in European societies, institutions, and states.

This denial is not only the case for extremist groups on the political fringe of the society, but rather far-right discourses have moved to the center of political power. Consequently, it is not only right-wing extremist groups that rely on the means of Islamophobic propaganda and discourse - social democrats, liberals, leftists or conservatives are not immune to this form of racism.

As a survey published by the FRA reveals 76% of Muslim respondents feel strongly attached to the country they live in, while 31% of those seeking work have been discriminated against in the last five years. At the same time, only 12% of Muslims say they have reported cases of discrimination. Hence, we can say with certainty that the extent of discrimination Muslims face in Europe is much greater than the numbers revealed in any report on Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime in Europe.

In other words, one can claim that all the available data and statistics about Islamophobia in Europe show only the tip of the iceberg. Therefore, revealing the comprehensiveness of structural anti-Muslim racism lies at the heart of the European Islamophobia Report project, which on a yearly basis analyzes the trends and developments in Europe from Russia to Portugal, and Malta to Norway.

About SETA
Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA) is a non-profit research institute based in Turkey dedicated to innovative studies on national, regional and international issues. SETA is the leading think tank in Turkey and has offices in Ankara, Istanbul, Washington D.C. and Cairo. The objective of SETA is to produce up-to-date and accurate knowledge and analyses in the fields of politics, economy, and society, and inform policy makers and the public on changing political, economic, social, and cultural conditions. Through research reports, publications, brainstorming sessions, conferences and policy recommendations, SETA seeks to guide leaders in government, civil society, and business, and contributes to informed decision making mechanisms.
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SETA is pleased to present the third edition of the annual *European Islamophobia Report* (EIR) succeeding the reports of 2015 and 2016. This year, 40 prominent scholars and civil society actors from various European countries who specialize in different fields such as racism, gender, and discrimination studies, present 33 country reports. In addition to highlighting the developments of Islamophobia in key fields such as employment, education and politics, they provide precious country-specific policy recommendations to counter this phenomenon and a detailed chronology of events. Since every year it applies the same methodological framework on a large number of European countries, the *European Islamophobia Report* (EIR) provides a unique collection of European-wide analyses in regard to anti-Muslim racism in Europe to policy makers, social scientists, and ordinary readers.

Monitoring Islamophobia in Europe became an urgent need in the last few years, since the phenomenon has sensibly increased, following economic recession and the rise of far-right politics. Today, Islamophobia constitutes a serious challenge for European democracies for at least four reasons:

- First of all, Islamophobia is severely impacting the life of millions of European Muslims facing racism at university, in the workplace, the public sphere, etc. In addition to representing a threat to their physical life, this racism undermines their place in society and their sense of belonging in European nation states.
• Secondly, the rise of Islamophobia both reflects and strengthens the normalization of far-right discourse in the political spectrum across Europe. Within a few months, neofascist parties entered the German Bundestag, accessed strategic ministries in Austria, and registered historical results in the French, Dutch and Italian elections.

• Thirdly, Islamophobia poses a problem of internal security as it intensifies tensions between communities, legitimizes hate crimes against individuals, and undermines the European Union ideals of peace and coexistence.

• Finally, Islamophobia represents an obstacle for European international relations, since it mars the EU image of tolerance worldwide and increases tension between EU member states and certain strategic partners, including Muslim countries.

Yet, even if Islamophobia objectively constitutes a threat for European democracies, many European intellectuals and politicians, both left- and right-wing, are still refuting the existence and the validity of the concept. Their worries about terrorist attacks and immigration are preventing them from acknowledging the daily racism that Muslims face in Europe. However, by denying Islamophobia, there is a risk – intended or not – to ignore the unacceptable reality experienced by millions of European citizens.

Based on this observation, as SETA, we decided to annually publish the European Islamophobia Report (EIR) in order to provide serious – yet accessible – analyses on a phenomenon that remains widely ignored and misunderstood. We hope this will be a vital contribution in the fight against Islamophobia in Europe.

Burhanettin Duran
General Coordinator of SETA
THE STATE OF ISLAMOPHOBIA IN EUROPE

ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ

This is the third issue of the annual European Islamophobia Report (EIR) consisting of an overall evaluation of Islamophobia in Europe in the year 2017, as well as 33 country reports which include almost all EU member states and additional countries such as Russia and Norway. This year’s EIR represents the work of 40 prominent scholars and civil society activists from various European countries.

In a presentation of the Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey’s selected findings on Muslims, the director of the European Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), Michael O’Flaherty, stressed that their survey clearly contradicts the claim that Muslims are not integrated into European societies. On the contrary, the survey found that the trust of Muslims in the democratic institutions of Europe is higher than much of the general population. Furthermore, O’Flaherty pointed out that “every incident of discrimination and hate crime, however, hinders their [Muslims’] inclusion and reduces their chances of finding work. We risk that we alienate individuals and their community from us, with all possible consequences.”

As the report based on a survey of 10,527 people who identified themselves as Muslims published by the FRA reveals 76% of Muslim respondents feel strongly attached to the country they live in, while 31% of those seeking work have been discriminated against in the last five years. At the same time, only 12% of Muslims say they have reported cases of discrimination. Hence, we can say with certainty that the extent of discrimination Muslims face in Europe is much greater than the numbers revealed in any report on Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime in Europe. In other words, one can claim that all the available data and statistics about Islamophobia in Europe show only the tip of the iceberg. Therefore, revealing the comprehensiveness of structural anti-Muslim racism lies at the heart of the European Islamophobia Report project, which on a yearly basis analyzes the trends and developments in almost all states in Europe from Russia to Portugal, and Malta to Norway.

However, NGOs and projects like the EIR cannot provide a European-wide daily monitoring mechanism given the colossal size of the problem and the funds required. Therefore, we think it is the duty of the nation states to put in place monitoring mechanisms and publish yearly data on anti-Muslim hate crimes in their respective countries. Yet, it is clear that we are far from that goal since there is no official documentation of anti-Muslim hate crime in the overwhelming majority of European nation states. Recently, Germany made an important step by including Islamophobia as a subcategory of “hate crimes” in the official police statistics of “politically motivated criminal acts.” We welcome this decision and urge other European nation states to follow suit, since Islamophobia is not only a fundamental threat to the coexistence of different religions and cultures but also a threat to the democratic foundations of Europe. Furthermore, tackling Islamophobia has also become an acute problem given the rise of racist, especially Islamophobic, anti-Semitic and anti-Roma far-right parties and the adaptation of their discourse by mainstream parties in many European nation states.

The first statistics, which were revealed for 2017 by the German State reveal around 71 attacks on mosques and 908 crimes against German Muslims (ranging from verbal to physical attacks and murder attempts). Germany also registered 1,413 attacks on refugees and 93 attacks on aid workers in Germany in the first 273 days of 2017. However, although the German state registered 71 attacks on mosques, the DITIB, which is an NGO, listed 101 attacks on mosques in Germany all throughout 2017. Therefore, bearing in mind also what the FRA revealed about the reluctance of Muslims to report incidents, one can claim that the estimated number of unknown cases might be more than eight times higher. There are various reasons for these phenomena; some of these include:
• Victims may not be aware of the reporting mechanisms.
• The victims’ possible social isolation or proximity to the perpetrator.
• The victims’ lack of trust in the authorities, due to fears that their claim will not be taken seriously.
• The victims’ fear of being victimized again by police officers.

In this regard, the OSCE ODIHR points out to the fact that “governments have a central role to play in ensuring access to justice; from the initial assessment of victims’ needs by police officers, to support mechanisms for victims through governmental or nongovernmental institutions.”

The denial of the very existence of Islamophobia/anti-Muslim racism/anti-Muslim hate crime in Europe by many demonstrates the need for an appropriate effort and political will to tackle this normalized racism and its manifestations that are deeply entrenched in European societies, institutions, and states. Intelligence services, such as the German Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, have realized the important role Islamophobia plays for right-wing extremist parties. Still, it is not only the case for extremist groups on the political fringe of the society, but rather far-right discourses have moved to the center of political power. Consequently, it is not only right-wing extremist groups that rely on the means of Islamophobic propaganda and discourse - social democrats, liberals, leftists or conservatives are no longer immune to this form of racism.

The recognition of Islamophobia is of utmost importance in Europe. Therefore, we welcome the Swedish government’s decision to launch a National Plan to Combat Racism, which also acknowledges Islamophobia as a problem that needs to be addressed. However, despite this positive step the Equality Ombudsman in Sweden followed the EU Court of Justice in ruling that company policies banning the Islamic headscarf are not discriminatory.

That is also why initiatives such as the report The Missing Muslims: Unlocking British Muslim Potential for the Benefit of All by Conservative MP Dominic Grieve, in which the government was urged to adopt a definition of anti-Muslim prejudice along the lines of that adopted in 2016 for anti-Semitism, are so important. Successfully combating Islamophobia requires outspoken and brave initiatives and persons (politicians and activists) who challenge this widespread normalized form of racism.

With the help of the new president of the USA, who defends his “Muslim Ban” by referring to invented terrorist attacks such as the one in Sweden, the imagined figure of the all-time lurking Muslim enemy is kept alive. When Trump tweet-

ed “You look at what’s happening last night in Sweden. Sweden, who would believe this? Sweden. They took in large numbers. They’re having problems like they never thought possible,”4 Swedish officials and reporters were bewildered since there were no major incidents that night. The climate of the age of fake news, which has always been central to the spread of conspiracy theories, is now exaggerated and expanded by leading politicians in the world, while the structural dimension of Islamophobia still exists at the heart of European societies and institutions. This situation requires a need for a clear stance by governing politicians, elites and intellectuals since they are bound by their constitutions and laws, and international and national human rights standards.

In this manner, British Prime Minister Theresa May criticized Trump for re-posting material from the far-right Britain First, while the U.S. president answered her with the advice that it would be better if she dealt with the “destructive radical Islamic Terrorism that is taking place within the United Kingdom” rather than focusing on him.5 It is quite clear that Europe needs more courageous leaders such as Alexander Van der Bellen, the president of the Austrian Republic, who defended the rights of women to wear a headscarf in a country where the far right has become the leading political power.6

**Combatting Islamophobia on the European and the Supranational Levels**

Combatting Islamophobia on national and regional levels is important but not enough. Therefore, there is a need for a concerted effort to combat Islamophobia first on the European level and second on the supranational level. In this regard both the coordination among different NGOs and the involvement of institutions such as the EU, the Council of Europe, the OSCE and the UN are essential. In 2017, there were some initial positive steps on the EU level, however, given the size of the problem there is still a long way to go.

As an NGO coalition statement following the 4th Roundtable on anti-Muslim hatred, which was organized by the European Commission (EC) and chaired by the EU coordinator on combatting anti-Muslim hatred, David Friggieri, made clear, a “stronger and more concrete commitment and actions”7 are needed to combat

Islamophobia. These civil society organizations argue that “there are still some misconceptions by the European institutions with regards to the issue of Islamophobia. With the generalised suspicion against Muslims, it is of utmost importance for EU policy makers not to fall into the trap of treating Muslims as potential problems but rather as human beings whose fundamental rights can be violated. Combatting Islamophobia is not about preventing radicalism or terrorism […] it is about politically addressing structural forms of discrimination and racism affecting Muslims or those perceived as such.”

Although the statements of high-ranking politicians such as Frans Timmerman, vice-president of the European Commission, in which he recognized the problem of Islamophobia are positive steps, the European Coalition against Islamophobia still sees a large potential for improvement regarding the fight against Islamophobia on the EU level. According to the European Coalition against Islamophobia, the EU and national legislations provide legal remedies for racist crime and discrimination, yet Muslims still suffer from violence, prejudice and exclusion in Europe. In this context, the FRA recommends better implementation of the relevant EU and national legislation to combat widespread harassment and hate crime against Muslims.

On March 14, 2017, the European Court of Justice (EJC) for the first time made two judgments to rule on non-discrimination at work on religious grounds. The EJC ruled that employers would be able to prohibit the wearing of religious garments by their employees. This was despite the content of Article 9, which secures the freedom of thought, conscience and religion of the European Convention on Human Rights. The EJC ruled that banning visible signs of political, philosophical or religious beliefs is “appropriate” to ensure a “policy of neutrality” if systematically applied as a company policy. Obviously, also observant Jews and other religious minorities will be affected by this as much as Muslim women and men. But the verdict has evolved in the context of the complaints of two Muslim women, one from France and one from Belgium. It will be Muslim women who will suffer from this regulation disproportionately. Amnesty International protested against this decision as potentially propelling increased discrimination on the basis of religious identity, especially against Muslim women. Also, many faith communities and vocal Muslim organizations in Brussels and beyond have objected to what they perceive a step towards further institutionalization of Islamophobia.

8. Ibid.
bia. While this verdict made clear that visible signs of political, philosophical or religious beliefs can be banned in private companies, it left many questions open regarding the decisions to be taken in the future.

As Bülent Senay, personal representative of the OSCE Chair-in-Office on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims, argued during the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2017, on a supranational level, institutions still lack means to fight Islamophobia. Amongst other important recommendations, he called the OSCE states to commit to recording hate crimes against Muslims as a separate disaggregated category. The OSCE ODIHR is also considering the preparation of a guide on hate crimes against Muslims and on the security needs of Muslim communities in the OSCE region. A similar guide has been prepared and published for Jewish communities.12 We think this would be a positive step to combatting Islamophobia in the OSCE region and, therefore, welcome the preparation of such a guide.

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance of the Council of Europe publishes an annual report on the ECRI’s activities, in which Islamophobia is also analyzed under a separate heading. In the last report, which covered the year 2016, the ECRI points to the fact that “Muslims continue to experience discrimination in various areas of social life, including education, employment and housing.”13 The ECRI concludes that the “negative experiences of Muslims in Europe can fuel feelings of isolation within a larger community and hinder inclusive societies.”14 However, we think that the Council of Europe, which consists of 47 states, can play a wider role in the combat against Islamophobia in Europe.

The European Coalition against Islamophobia, which consists of 13 NGOs,15 has published its suggestion for an action plan for 2018-2019 to fight Islamophobia in the European Union. This plan puts the recognition of Islamophobia at its center and among other important recommendations calls the European Parliament to adopt a resolution on combating Islamophobia as it did on combatting anti-Semitism and anti-Gypsiesm.16

14. Ibid.
15. The members of this coalition are the following: European Forum of Muslim Women; Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations; Karamah EU; European Muslim Initiative for Social Cohesion; European Network against Racism; and the Collective against Islamophobia in France.
A resolution adopted by the UN Human Rights Council on March 23, 2016 (Resolution 31/16) expressed “concern over violent attacks motivated by anti-religious bias, targeting individuals belonging to religious minorities, as well as religious places, and recommended that states prevent, investigate and punish such acts.”17 Although this is more a general resolution on freedom of religion it is still relevant to EU states which are witnessing an unprecedented rise of anti-Muslim hate crimes in the last decade. More concretely, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance reported that “the fear of terrorism and racist and xenophobic speech often translate into increases in hate crimes targeting Muslims, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.” Like many others, the special rapporteur reiterated the importance of collecting disaggregated data on hate crimes targeting Muslims and others.18

The Rise of the Far Right in Europe

Beyond the supranational level, there are observable trends in different European nation states. Firstly, the far-right political camp has moved from the periphery to the center and become integral to the political landscape in Europe. While most far-right parties are still in opposition, some have gained major influence by becoming governing parties such as in the cases of Austria, Bulgaria, and Finland. While others may still be in opposition, their Islamophobic discourse, which is so central to most of them, has become mainstream since their issues have been co-opted by former centrist political parties. In Sweden, for instance, the once marginal anti-Muslim Sweden Democrats became the third or second largest party in opinion polls, pushing most other parties to adjust their policies accordingly. Secondly, we also observe a stronger cooperation of various Islamophobic parties in Europe. For instance, the Czech Freedom and Direct Democracy Party (SPD) organized a meeting of representatives of its partners from the European Parliament in December 2017 in Prague. Politicians such as Geert Wilders (Dutch Freedom Party) and Marine Le Pen (Front National) were amongst some of the participants.

From Sweden to Greece, from Poland to the Netherlands, the rise of far-right parties is a vital threat to democratic order in Europe. What is more dangerous is the mainstreaming and normalization of the far-right policies within mainstream politics. Austria is a wake-up call and the prime example of this horror story which might repeat itself in many European countries if European societies do not seriously tackle this disturbing trend.

18. Ibid.
The Right Wing in Opposition

As mentioned above in the majority of EU countries far-right parties are still in opposition. However, when in opposition, right-wing political parties are even more explicit about their racist utopia and hence speak out in a harsher and more direct way against Muslims. By doing so, they are playing a crucial role in the normalization of anti-Muslim discourse in Europe.

There are many examples of this blatant anti-Muslim racism, some of which will be presented here. In this context, the Northern League’s candidate for president of the Lombardy region of Italy warned that there is a “risk that the white race disappears and is replaced by migrants.” In Slovenia, right-wing populist and extremist parties are not strong enough to win elections, however they are very active on social media and in the organization of public events and protests. For instance, Nova 24TV in Slovenia broadcasted the following Islamophobic opinion: “Obviously, we do not have enough terrorists, rapists and other criminals in Europe. It seems that leading politicians want to bring even more. Only this can explain their desire for the ever-increasing inclusion of migrants and Muslims in European countries.”

In Latvia, numerous pre-election programs of various parties for the 2017 municipal elections demonstrated unambiguous Islamophobic positions. In Riga, the Action Party of Eurosceptics (Eiroskeptiķu Rīcības partija) published the following slogan in their program, “We are not against Muslims, we are against the Islamization of Latvia and Europe.” The National Alliance (Nacionālā apvienīb) was even more radical in its program in which it stated that it was “in support of not letting into Liepāja illegal immigrants called ‘refugees’ – potential criminals, terrorists and idlers! There will be no mosques here!”

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, anti-Muslim bigotry and negative trends towards Muslims were evident mainly in the educational, political and media sectors. The main generators of Islamophobic discourse and anti-Muslim bigotry are the Bosnian Serb political, media and academic policymakers.

For the first time since 1989 a right-wing extremist party managed to enter parliament in Slovakia. The opposition party ‘We Are a Family – Boris Kolar’ submitted

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a bill to amend the laws to enable a ban on building mosques. Eleven members voted for the proposal, 48 against it, while more than a half of the MPs, 77 in total, abstained from the vote.

In Southern Cyprus, a newly established party, the far-right ELAM (Ethniko Laiko Metopo), which is a sister party to Greece’s Golden Dawn, has significantly contributed to spreading Islamophobia in the southern part of the island. Although ELAM is a very small party and only managed to enter parliament in 2016 with 3.71% (allowing them 2 MPs), their views are widespread; the archbishop of southern Cyprus often expresses his agreement with ELAM’S positions.

The successful Swiss right-wing party SVP tried to introduce a full-face veil ban in Sweden. Another parliamentary initiative by National Councillor Yannick Buttet (CVP) demanded a “mandatory labelling of imported halal meat at all stages of sales as well as an increase in the price of imported halal meat.”23 Although the National Council accepted the initiative, the Council of States rejected it.

In Switzerland, the parliamentary motion by Lorenzo Quadri from the regional right-wing party Lega, which was adopted in the National Council, instructed the Federal Council to draw up a bill, which, following the rules that apply in Austria, provides a guarantee for the following: “(1) The prohibition of Islamic places of worship and imams who accept funds from abroad; (2) The obligation for Islamic centers to disclose the origin and use of their finances; (3) The duty to conduct sermons in the language of residence.”24

Meanwhile in the UK, UKIP’s election manifesto promised a public ban on “face coverings” and proscribed sharia courts in the UK. In the Netherlands, radical parties such as the Dutch SGP (a radical Christian party) published a manifesto,25 which argued that “the love offer of Jesus Christ and Muhammad’s use of violence are as different as day and night.”26

Beyond political parties, on the more extreme non-parliamentarian level or the grassroots level, far-right groups, such as the Identitarian movement or ones that function underground, pose a threat to Muslims in Europe, especially in their most violent form. Nationalist groups such as, among others, the Finnish branch of the Nordic Resistance Movement and the “Finland First” movement were active in spreading their ideology of hate.

26. Ibid., p. 2.
The Right Wing in Power

Currently, there are a few governments in Europe, which include right-wing parties that have focused heavily on using Islamophobia as a means of gaining public support and political power. After the general elections in Norway, the Progress Party, which is often regarded as a right-wing populist party and which had an openly Islamophobic election campaign, governs together with the conservatives in a coalition. Consequently, for the first time in Norwegian history, there are government representatives who do not shy away from using Islamophobic discourse. The Progress Party’s minister for immigration and integration, Sylvi Listhaug, suggested a prohibition against hijabs at elementary schools, which was not supported by the coalition partner. The party also proposed to ban the circumcision of baby boys, which also found no support in parliament. A third proposal, a national ban of the face veil in schools and institutions of higher education, won broad parliamentary support and is currently being circulated for consultation.

In the Czech Republic, a new party called ANO won the elections. Its leader supported the notorious Islamophobic politician, Czech President Miloš Zeman. The leader of the right-wing populist party Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD), which campaigns continuously for a legal ban of Islam, became vice-chair of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic. Although there is a tiny Muslim community in the country, the 2017 national elections were the first in the history of the Czech Republic, during which attitudes towards Muslims were a central issue.

In Bulgaria, a hostile language towards Muslims is winning ground. Especially, during election campaigns, anti-Muslim rhetoric was at its peak. Many extreme right-wing political parties such as ATAKA, NFSB (National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria), and IMRO (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization) are part of the current government and form a coalition with the leading party.

In Serbia, there are ministers such as Aleksandar Vulin, minister of defense, and Nebojša Stefanovic, minister of the interior, who attract attention by stirring ethnic and religious hostilities. Today, we can witness a revival of political parties and forces from the 1990s in the political arena. Currently, the strongest parties are those that were the most important players in the aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo. A rise in nationalism and hate speech targeting Muslims can be seen in the public sphere. Crimes committed against Muslims are glorified.

Co-option of Islamophobia by Centrist Parties

We observe a general trend within centrist political parties to co-opt the Islamophobic discourse of right-wing political parties. The former president of Romania, Traian Basescu, proclaimed in the midst of a debate on a mosque in Bucharest that this was...
“a risk to national security,” and argued that “part of the Islamization of Europe is building mosques everywhere.” During a local council election in Bucharest in June 2016, several leading Bucharest mayoral candidates argued for a referendum on the mosque, amongst them the current mayor Gabriela Firea of the Social Democratic Party (Partidul Social Democrat – PSD).

In Poland, there is no nominal right-wing political party, but a conservative party in power, which nevertheless allows an unambiguous negative image of Islam to be spread in state institutions. State-funded media outlets seem to carefully select their guests, who spread a stereotypical portrayal of Muslims as “violent,” “terrorists,” “Jihadists,” “sexists,” “rapists,” “uncivilized,” “double-faced,” and in general “a threat” to European and Christian values. While a research commissioned by the Commissioner of Human Rights on the attitudes among Polish secondary school students was published in 2017, showing that the majority of the 396 respondents reveal strong anti-refugee, Islamophobic and homophobic prejudice, the Ministry of Education shut down anti-discrimination programs in Polish schools and instead promoted programs supporting patriotism and a national and cultural Polish identity.

In Spain, former president of Madrid and of the senate, and former minister of culture, Esperanza Aguirre, tweeted that January 2 was a glorious day for Spanish women who otherwise would not enjoy any freedom under the rule of Islam. In Slovakia, former president Robert Fico argued that he will “not allow the creation of an integrated Muslim community in Slovakia.”

In Hungary, the ruling conservative Fidesz competed in Islamophobic rhetoric with the far right. It finally managed to make anti-Muslim narratives become un-

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contested and thus realized a support of an overwhelming portion of the population. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán became famous for the alleged conspiracy of George Soros to Islamize Europe with the help of “hordes of migrants raping Europe.”33

During the national presidential elections in France in 2017, Islamophobia was omnipresent not only in the campaign of the Front National but also in an array of other candidates’ campaigns. Also during the national elections in the Netherlands in 2017, there was a race between the right-wing populist party of Geert Wilders (PVV) and the center-right party of Mark Rutte (VVD). Some intellectuals, before the elections, discussed whether the number of Muslims could be reduced by deportation. Prominent Law Professor Paul Cliteur was present during the debate and discussed how this could be made possible legally.

In Denmark, the leader of the Social Democrats, Mette Frederiksen, argued that there is no need for Muslim private schools and that they would be strengthening the isolation of Muslims. Frederiksen argued that “a school with a foundation in Islam is not part of the majority culture in Denmark.”34 Bias against Muslims within the oppositional social democratic party intensified. This is also true for the conservatives in Austria. There, the then-leader of the conservatives and now chancellor, Sebastian Kurz, argued that there should not be any private Muslim kindergartens in the country.

Denying the Suffering

In many European countries, the very existence of Islamophobia itself is denied. In countries like Austria and Norway, leading journalists of editorial boards shift the focus from Islamophobia as a problem to Islamophobia as a “combat term,” arguing that the term itself is used by Islamists to delegitimize any debate on Islam and Muslims. Hence, there is a reluctance to use the term “Islamophobia” in the public sphere. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, there is a denial of the anti-Muslim genocide. Nationalist movements and even parts of the Croatian political establishment argue that the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to be territorially divided in order to secure peace and security. Convictions such as in the case of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague fueled Islamophobia within these separatist and nationalist movements. Republika Srpska, continued its separatist policy in 2017 and was supported by visits from abroad, especially members of the right-wing Austrian FPÖ, which now forms a government with the conservative ÖVP.

The (Mis-)Use of Education and Academia

An unsubstantiated report on an alleged Muslim Brotherhood conspiracy to establish an Islamic State in Sweden was published by a Swedish state agency. The Administrative Court of Appeal later dismissed the report as of “highly limited” value. The author is a senior fellow at the Brussels-based think tank European Foundation for Democracy, which plays a central role in disseminating this conspiracy theory, which helps in defaming Muslim civil society actors. Also in Austria, a report was published on an alleged Muslim Brotherhood conspiracy by another senior policy advisor of the same think tank in cooperation with a state agency. The report had no serious impact, since it was presented a few days before the elections and did not receive major coverage due to other political scandals. The current chancellor of Austria Sebastian Kurz has been central in sponsoring ‘studies’ on Muslims in Austria (one on Muslim kindergartens, the other on mosques), which would serve his increasingly Islamophobic agenda. Also, Islamophobia is a threat, when good initiatives are legitimized for the wrong ends. Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama defended the need for religious instruction in public schools with the prevention of the radicalization of young Muslims.

Online Islamophobia

Islamophobic groups are especially active on the Internet. Often, the Internet is where right-wing groups emerge before materializing in “real life.” Therefore, better regulations are needed in this sphere to combat the spread of Islamophobic content which is the main source in the radicalization of far-right terrorist groups or lone wolves.

Groups such as the explicitly Islamophobic Identitarian Movement that represents the postmodern face of the New Right, is active in countries like Slovenia, Hungary. Malta witnessed the emergence of its first far-right party, the Ghaqda Patrijotti Maltin (Maltese Patriots). While doing poorly in elections, their media campaign and social media advertisements presented many Islamophobic statements. In countries with a negligible Muslim population like Latvia, Islamophobic attitudes are still mostly voiced on the Internet. In Italy, a significant research on intolerance based on an analysis of Twitter realized by Voxdiritti in 2016 ranked Muslims as the fourth most targeted group (6% of all tweets).35

Legalizing Islamophobia

Early in 2017, the Austrian government, made up of social democrats and conservatives, passed a law that outlawed the veiling of the face. Romania followed

with a legislative proposal for the ban of face veiling in educational institutions initiated by the ruling People’s Movement Party (PMP). The asserted aim was the prevention of violence and terrorism. The law was launched by 26 MPs from three parliamentary parties. Also, in Latvia, where – similar to Romania – there are nearly no Muslims, a draft law on the restriction of wearing a face veil was prepared by the Ministry of Justice in 2015 and is still under consideration. In Belgium, the parliament voted for limitations on ritual slaughter including the prohibition of Muslim halal slaughter. Also, a debate on a state takeover of the Grand Mosque of Belgium began. In a small village in Hungary, a mayor passed a law to ban the construction of mosques and minarets, the Muslim call for prayer, the chador, niqab, burqa, and burkini. The mayor argued that he wished to set a positive example for other Hungarian municipalities in order to guarantee the ‘centuries-old traditions’ of local communities in the face of mass migration to the country. After massive protests in the entire country, the mayor had to withdraw the legislation for contradicting a number of basic rights guaranteed by the Hungarian Constitution. In November 2017, however, the local council voted in favor of the same legislation that was amended after merely removing any words referring to Islam from the text. Also, the Dutch Christian-Democrats (CDA) included a ban on the financing of mosques from abroad and were wary of “radical Islam” in their campaign program.

In Finland, a citizens’ initiative was launched to amend a law in favor of a “Burka Ban.” Among the initiators was Terhi Kiemunki, a former member of the Finns Party, who was convicted of incitement to hatred due to texts on her blog defaming Muslims. A spokesperson of the initiative was Jukka Ketonen, current chairman of the Finnish Defense League (FDL), who proclaims to be fighting against “Islamic extremism” and is known for other smaller initiatives such as demonstrations against “Islamization” before a school. In Denmark, a ban on full-face veils, a so-called “mask ban” (popularly referred to as the “niqab ban”) was proposed by the Danish
People’s Party following the verdict by the European Court of Human Rights. This initiative was not only supported by the right wing, but also the Social Democrats and the Danish Social Liberal Party, arguing that they would, thus, empower Muslim women. There is also a law prohibiting male circumcision under way in Denmark.

**Terrorist Attacks against Muslims**

In Europe, the largest number of attacks which could conclusively be affiliated to terrorist organizations were carried out by racists, nationalists and separatist extremists (99), followed by left-wing extremist attacks (27). Nevertheless, Jihadist terrorist attacks (13) and the general Muslim population in Europe associated with it are largely seen as the greatest threat to European societies. Irresponsible politicians and media play their part in supporting this trend.

There are worrying signs of far-right terrorist groups and lone wolf far-right terrorists increasing their activities and targeting Muslims in Europe. Attacks against mosques and Muslim institutions have become a daily routine. For instance, according to the DITIB in Germany there were 101 attacks on mosques throughout 2017. However, the attacks against Muslims, persons who are perceived as Muslims, and persons who are vocal in their support for Muslim or refugee rights are becoming more and more frequent and violent. In Germany, the government registered around 908 hate crimes in 2017 against German Muslims, ranging from verbal to physical attacks and murder attempts. As a result of these Islamophobic attacks in Europe, there are already victims of Islamophobic terrorist attacks who have either been killed or severely injured. Below we have summarized the most important attacks in 2017.

On the night of April 15, 2017, the 22-year-old Egyptian student Shaden Mohamed al-Gohary was killed in a hit-and-run incident in Cottbus, Germany. The most shocking part is that while she lay injured on the street, people started insulting her in racist ways, believing she was a refugee. The attackers eventually came back on foot and said things like “Well, they gotta check the street first, since they don’t have streets at home. They should fuck off to their damn country.”

In Germany, the conservative mayor of Altena, Andreas Hollstein, known for his welcoming stance towards refugees was stabbed in the neck and seriously injured in a knife attack at a kebab restaurant.

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In Sweden, three members of the national socialist Nordic Resistance Movement were sentenced to up to eight-and-a-half years in prison. The trio was found guilty of bombings of two refugee housings and a libertarian socialist trade union office in Gothenburg, which severely wounded one person. They were trained in urban guerrilla warfare by a Russian radical nationalist and anti-Muslim paramilitary organization. The perpetrators were influenced by Islamophobic and anti-Semitic discourse, which was clear in a recorded video prayer to All-Father Odin in which they vowed to “retake our land” and “take the fight against you who have defiled our country.” “Oh Jew, oh Muslim / We Norsemen have awakened / You should fear us / We are coming after you / The rage of the Norsemen thunder / Be assured / Oh, Jew and Muslim / The Norsemen are coming after you.” The fact that Islamophobia goes hand in hand with other forms of racism, such as anti-Semitism in this case, should be a symbolic reminder for those, who are aware of European history.

Beyond this example of a right-wing extremist movement, the case of Hungary, where the ruling Fidesz party mobilizes against George Soros while portraying him as a conspirator alongside Muslims to change the European population, reveals again that racism will eventually target every minority.

On September 27, 2017, four members of the banned neo-Nazi group National Action in the UK were arrested on suspicion of preparing and instigating acts of terrorism. According to the UK’s Defense Ministry some of them were soldiers serving in the British army.

In Germany, two supporters of a neo-Nazi terrorist group were arrested on January 14 after 155 kg of explosives were discovered in their home. On April 27, a German soldier posing as a Syrian refugee was arrested for allegedly planning a “false flag” shooting attack against politicians that would be blamed on asylum seekers.

On October 17, 2017, 10 far-right militants were arrested by French anti-terrorist police in France. According to the TV station M6, they were suspected of...
planning attacks on French politicians and on Muslim places of worship.51

In Russia, between 2012 and 2016, five imams were killed in the Stavropol region. The cases remain unresolved to this day. All the assassinated imams were involved in civic activism and they openly resisted the prohibition of the hijab in the Stavropol region.

On June 19, 2017, a man drove his van deliberately into a crowd of Muslim worshippers leaving the north London Finsbury Park Mosque. As a result of this attack, one person was killed and eleven were injured.

In Poland, a Pakistani Muslim man was severely beaten by a group of men in Ozorków on January 3, 2017. On April 8, 2017, three Pakistani Muslim men were severely beaten in Swidwin Polan.

**Threatening the Religious Infrastructure**

More than two decades after the Agreements of 1992 between the Islamic communities and the Spanish state, basic rights such as access to religious education or the possibility of burying the Muslim dead in an Islamic cemetery have not been put into practice in most of the Spanish regions; small steps, however, are being taken in this sense. In Malta, there were debates about the legitimacy of teaching Islam to Muslim pupils.

In Slovakia, there has been a parliamentary debate on a draft law that toughened the registration of churches and religious communities and a draft has been submitted by members of the government of the Slovak National Party (SNS). This trend of discrimination against Muslims, who are a small minority in Slovakia and thus directly affected by these amendments, has been noticed by the U.S. Department of State, which in its report on religious freedom in the world noted the disparity in the approach to religious rights in the country. Today, it is impossible for the Muslim community to become an officially registered religious community in Slovakia.

In Greece, three mosques located inside non-governmental organizations belonging to members of the Muslim Turkish minority were closed by the Greek police - one of them had existed for 12 years. Officially, the closures were due to the lack of the necessary permissions to function a house of prayer inside the premises.

In Bulgaria, an indifference from the part of governments to the religious needs of Muslims can be observed. There is a lack of funding by the state be it in the area of religious education, Muslims’ attempts to develop a cultural-religious center, or the blocking of Muslims’ attempts to regain property ownership of waqf properties. Also, many Muslim religious employees, which were formerly and legally paid by the Turkish government, had to leave their jobs because the Council of Ministers of Bulgaria unilaterally cancelled the treaty between Bulgaria and Turkey and did not

inform the representatives of the Office of the Grand Mufti, which faced a structural crisis after being informed three months later.

On a European level, the European Citizens’ Initiative against Extremism (Stop Extremism) was founded and recognized on June 7, 2017 by the European Commission. Among its initiators are Seyran Ates and Efgani Dönmez, who are known for their notorious Islamophobic positions. Supporters include well-known Islamophobes such as Abdel-Hakim Ourghi, Ralph Ghadban, Saida Keller-Messahli, and Necla Kelek. The initiative, which came under criticism when leaks by the weekly *Falter* revealed that more than 20,000 Euros, the budget specified by the EU Commission, could potentially be used to restrict Muslims’ religious activities. Stop Extremism calls for “the introduction of a joint, EU-wide watch list to which individuals and organizations with an extremist background could be added” as well as for the introduction of an “Extremism-free” certification for organizations and businesses. Initiatives like this seem to target specifically Muslims, not extremists, and to restrain their scope of activities, which ultimately reflects already existing restrictions as discussed above.

**Steps Forward and Policy Recommendations**

The picture presented here shows us that there is an urgent need to counter these developments. And there is room for hope. Critical assessment of the current situation regarding Muslims in Europe is growing within parts of civil society. Not only are there more and more institutions that are working to bring attention to the rise in hate crime towards Muslims such as the Spain-based Observatorio de la Islamofobia en los Medios but there are also favorable developments such as in the Norwegian justice system which has developed positive steps regarding monitoring and convicting cases involving hate speech or discrimination against Muslims. Also, the German Federal Police has made a first important institutional step to combatting Islamophobia by documenting it: for the first time, Islamophobia has been included as a category of hate crime.

There are more and more politicians, who dare to openly speak out against the threat of Islamophobia. President of the Slovak Republic Andrej Kiska stood up for Muslims in his New Year’s speech. Also, Austrian President Alexander Van der Bellen took a stance of solidarity with Muslim women wearing the hijab. Finnish Prime Minister Juha Sipilä called people not to respond to “hate with hate” in the aftermath of the stabbings by a Muslim citizen, which led to increased harassment, violent physical attacks as well as acts of vandalism against Muslim properties van-

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dalism towards Muslims. These examples of political courage give hope that there still exist reasonable politicians, who look beyond their ephemeral political careers, keeping the good of the whole of society in mind. With an increase of alternative right-wing media and social media bubbles as well as a general swing to the right, hate speech is becoming more and more normalised. In an especially extreme incident in the Czech Republic, children in a primary school in the city of Teplice were threatened with death in gas chambers; the class was comprised predominantly of children of Arab or Romani origin. Such incidents call for an unambiguous reaction on behalf of politicians and opinion leaders.

The authors of every respective national report have suggested specific recommendations regarding the country they have covered. This will support all those forces within European societies, who work towards a more equal society and fight every form of racism. The editors of the EIR support the following recommendations which were made by the OSCE ODIHR office, the FRA, the ENAR, the European Coalition against Islamophobia, and other NGOs:

- In the face of the increased and generalized suspicion and marginalization of Muslims in the post-terrorist attacks and migration contexts and the deep impact the former have had on Muslims’ lives, including newly arrived migrants, the recognition of the specific form of racism targeting Muslims (or those perceived as such) is crucial.

- The misconceptions and demonization surrounding the fight against Islamophobia and visible Muslims, in general, need to be challenged; data, facts and concrete solutions need to be visible in order to improve the recognition of Islamophobia and influence policy changes.

- This should lead to informed anti-racism/anti-discrimination policies and support the implementation of anti-discrimination legislation on the national and European levels. EU institutions need to recognize and address Islamophobia politically as a form of racism that can lead to human rights violations.

- While the issue of Islamophobia has gained more visibility in recent years at the EU level, there is a clear need for stronger actions that will materialize recognition into concrete political actions.

- Considering their competence on the issue of anti-racism and non-discrimination, EU institutions have the possibility to support progress and change in this area. The appointment of the European Commission's coordinator on combatting anti-Muslim hatred following the European Commission's 2015 colloquium on anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim hatred has created a momentum for the EU to act.

• The legal and political recognition of Islamophobia is of utmost importance. Therefore, a European-level conference on Islamophobia should be organized with the support of at least one EU Member State or the European Parliament.

• In this context, the European Parliament should adopt a resolution on combating Islamophobia with concrete policy recommendations and ways forward - as it did to combat anti-Semitism and anti-Gypsism.

• The adoption of EU standards for National Action Plans against Racism that take into account specific forms of racism, and include specific measures on Islamophobia with objectives and targets is necessary.

• EU member states should adopt national action plans against racism addressing Islamophobia as a specific form of racism.

• The European Commission should develop a roadmap detailing main policy instruments, issues and examples of good practice by Member States. This would function as a standard document that would be the basis for concrete operational objectives and action plans for the EU coordinator on combating anti-Muslim hatred.

• The European Commission’s coordinator on anti-Muslim hatred should develop a clear action plan for combatting Islamophobia.

• A high-level roundtable should be organized with the European Commission’s coordinator on anti-Muslim hatred and NGOs on the issue of Islamophobia.

• Europe needs courageous leaders and activists who can confront the Islamophobic discourses and narratives in the age of rising far-right parties.

• A Guidance handbook should be developed on the collection methodology of hate crime data for EU Member States in order to ensure that Islamophobia is duly recorded according to the victims’ and witnesses’ perceptions and lived experiences; other bias indicators should be included in the data collection as well.

• The recording of anti-Muslim/Islamophobic crimes as a separate category of hate crime by the police is essential to uncover the real extent of this problem and to develop counter-strategies to combat it.

• Muslim women’s access to employment should be improved since they are the most discriminated group among Muslims. Gender equality departments and the corresponding committees of EU institutions should give specific attention to situations of discrimination affecting Muslim women by documenting the issue and pushing for specific programs and measures to combat it.

• While protecting free speech, developing good guidelines to tackle online hate speech and considering primary legislation to deal with social media offences and online hate speech are also vital since the Internet plays an important role in the spread of Islamophobic discourses and also in the radicalization of far-right terrorists.
• Discrimination in the workplace should be tackled to address the low level of economic activity among Muslims through targeted interventions at the stages of recruitment, job retention, and promotion.

• Preserving the Human Rights Act and the protection of minority rights including religious slaughter, circumcision and the wearing of religious attire or symbols are imperative for a multicultural Europe.

• Counter-terrorism policies should work with Muslim communities, not against them, in the so-called “de-radicalization” programs. These programs should also incorporate the fight against far-right and far-left terrorist groups and should not only target Muslims.
ISLAMOPHOBIA IN NUMBERS

- The overwhelming majority of European states do not record Islamophobic incidents as a separate category of hate crime. The recording of anti-Muslim/Islamophobic crimes by the police as a separate category of hate crime is essential to uncover the real extent of this problem and to develop counter-strategies to combat it.

- In the EU, only 12% of Muslims who have been discriminated against report their cases to the authorities. (Source: FRA) The non-exhaustive list that follows hints at the extent of underreporting of anti-Muslim hate crimes in Europe by states and NGOs, which has serious implications regarding the awareness of Muslims and the bureaucracy to tackle these issues.

DENMARK
In 2016, **56** Islamophobic incidents were reported. 20% of the all hate crime committed in 2016 targeted Muslims, while the group make up 5% of the general population, making Muslims the most targeted minority. (Source: National Police)

BELGIUM
In the month following the terror attacks in Brussels, **36** Islamophobic incidents were recorded. (Source: CCIB).

AUSTRIA
**256** Islamophobic incidents were documented. (Source: EIR Report, Antidiscrimination Office Styria, ZARA, and Initiative for a Discrimination-Free Education [IDB]).
GERMANY

- 100 attacks occurred on mosques.
  (Source: DITIB and German State)
- 908 attacks took place targeting German Muslims.
- 60% of all Muslim teaching staff felt discriminated.
  (Source: Karim Fereidooni)
- There were 1,906 criminal attacks on refugees
  (5.2 attacks per day).
- There were 286 attacks against refugee shelters
  (0.8 attacks per day).
- 132 criminal acts and physical attacks against
  (refugee) aid workers occurred (0.4 attacks per day).
  (Source: German state)

FRANCE

- 121 Islamophobic incidents were reported.
  (Source: Observatory of Islamophobia)
- 19 Muslim places of worship were closed by the government;
  749 individuals were placed under house arrest;
  over 4,500 police raids were conducted;
  and the list of individuals under government surveillance
  has reached 25,000.
- 17,393 individuals were enrolled in the Terrorism Prevention Database (FSPRT).

MALTA

- 7% of Muslims have experienced physical violence.
- 25% of Muslims have experienced harassment.
NORWAY
• In 2017, 14% of Muslims experienced harassment.

NETHERLANDS
• 364 incidents of discrimination against Muslims occurred in 2016.
  (Source: Verwey Jonker Institute and Anne Frank Foundation)

POLAND
• In 2017, Muslims were the most targeted group representing 20% of all hate crime cases.
  (Source: National Prosecutor’s Office)
• Between January and October 2017, there were 664 hate crime proceedings regarding attacks against Muslims.
  (Source: Ministry of Interior)
• 193 (29%) of those proceedings resulted in an indictment.
  (Source: Ministry of Interior)
THE STATE OF ISLAMOPHOBIA IN EUROPE

UNITED KINGDOM

- The terrorist attack in Manchester in May resulted in a fivefold increase in Islamophobic hate crime in the Greater Manchester region. (Source: Greater Manchester Police)

- Hate crime cases targeting Muslims in Greater London for the entire year of 2017 increased to 1,204 from 1,678 in the previous year, which is equal to a 40% rise. (Source: Scotland Yard)

- Between March and July 2017, the number of attacks on mosques climbed to 110 from 47 in the previous year. (Source: Tell MAMA UK)

- In 2016, 1,223 cases of Islamophobic attacks were reported to Tell MAMA. Twenty percent of these incidents involve physical attacks; 56% of the victims were women, while two-thirds of the perpetrators were men.

SWEDEN

- In 2016, 439 hate crimes with Islamophobic motives were recorded. (Source: Swedish Crime Survey-NTU)

SPAIN

- In 2017, 546 attacks took place against Muslims. (Source: Plataforma Ciudadana contra la Islamofobia)

SOURCE

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Executive Summary

In 2017, from the socioeconomic aspect, there was no improvement in the general situation of ethnic minorities, which include those professing the Islamic confession, such as Bosniak, Albanian, Roma, Gorani, Egyptian, and others. What is particularly alarming is the aggressive revival of political parties, organizations and individuals that were active protagonists, ideological torchbearers and staunch supporters of the Serbian expansionist political agenda in the 1990s, who are responsible for the ethnic cleansing of Muslims that took place in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. In that context, we presently see that the National Parliament is absolutely dominated by political parties well-known for their long-time ultranationalist standpoints, which often manifests in a radical anti-Muslim stance. Likewise, in the Serbian government there are ministers, such as Aleksandar Vulin, Minister of Defense, and Nebojša Stefanović, Minister of the Interior, who often make statements which incite ethnic and hence religious hostilities both in the country and the region. In such a socio-political atmosphere, on several occasions we saw hate speech disseminated by media outlets either close to the ruling party or controlled by clero-nationalist organizations. Moreover, we are seeing a growing trend of such contents in cyberspace as well. This has a huge potential to significantly impact the youth who are predominantly turning to the Internet as a source of information. Warmongering and hate speech increased after actions taken by Bakir Izetbegović, Bosniak member of the tripartite Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovar leader Hashim Thaçi and Ramush Haradinaj, as well as the pronouncements and verdicts of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) at The Hague. Likewise, in the entire public sphere, ranging from education to media, there is still a strong feeling of anti-Turkism which is spread through media writing about alleged Turkish expansionist plans in its foreign policy. In 2017, the verdict delivered against Ratko Mladić, who was convicted of war crimes and genocide in Srebrenica, and the tearing down of the mosque in the Zemun Polje neighbourhood, in Belgrade, which was carried out just before the month of Ramadan, were significant events.
IZVRŠNI REZIME

U društveno-političkoj sferi tokom 2017. godine nije došlo do poboljšanja položaja nacionalnih zajednica koje su ujedno i islamske veroispovesti poput: Bošnjaka, Albanaca, Roma, Goranaca, Aškalija, Egipćana, i drugih. Ono što izuzetno zabrinjava jeste snažan povratak na scenu političkih partija, organizacija i pojedinaca koji su bili aktivni protagonisti, ili su pak idejno-vrednosni nastavljači, srbijanske ekspanzionističke političke ideologije iz 90ih godina koja je odgovorna za sprovođenje etničkog čišćenja nad muslimanima u Bosni i Hercegovini i na Kosovu. U tom kontekstu u republičkom parlamentu svedočimo apsolutnu dominaciju partija koje su poznate po dugogodišnjim ultra nacionalističkim stavovima, koji se neretko manifestuju i putem snažnih anti-muslimanskih narativa. Isto tako, i u samoj vladi pojedini ministri - poput Aleksandra Vulina ministra obrane i Nebojše Stefanovića ministra unutrašnjih poslova - često daju izjave koje potpiruju etničke, a samim time i verske, netrpeljivosti u državi i regionu. Usled takve društveno-političke klime u više navrata smo bili svedoci snažnog govora mržnje medijskih kuća koje su bliske vladajućoj koaliciji, ili su pak pod kontrolom klero-nacionalističkih organizacija. Takođe, ono što postaje sveprisutniji trend, jeste da je navedeni sadržaj u konstantnom porastu i u online sferi usled čega ima značajan potencijal da izvrši snažan uticaj na mlade koji se zarad informisanja prvenstveno koriste internetom. Govor mržnje I ratnohuškački narativi se po pravilu javljaju kao reakcija na delovanje Bakira Izetbegovića bošnjačkog člana Predsedništva Bosne i Hercegovine i kosovskih lidera Hašima Tačija i Ramuša Haradinaja, kao i na rad Haškog tribunala. Takođe, u svim sferama, od edukativne do medijske, i dalje je prisutna konstantna “turfobija” koja se afirmiše putem pisanja o ekspanzionističkim namerama turske spoljne politike.

U izveštaju ćemo se osvrnuti i na presudu Ratku Mladiću koji je proglašen križnim za genocid u Srebrenici, kao i na rušenje džamije u Beogradu u naselju Zemun polje koje se desilo uoči početka Ramazanskog posta.
Introduction

When speaking about the Balkans, religion is a central mark in racism due to the fact that ethnicities and religions have always been closely connected. Over time, prejudices against religion have evolved and turned into ethnically - or racially-based hatred. Only in such context can we comprehend the attitude taken by the Serbian government and institutional and systematic discrimination carried out in Serbia against ethnic minorities such as Bosniaks, Albanians and Roma, who also profess the Islamic religion.

In 2017, relations between Serbian and Kosovar state officials were characterized by a constantly heated atmosphere. There were also several conflicts which marked the relation between the Serbian government and Bakir Izetbegović, Bosniak member of the tripartite Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In such circumstances, the Serbian media often created an atmosphere of total psychosis, insinuating a possibility of more armed conflicts. Bearing in mind the Muslim legacy from the wars in the 1990s throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, the Sanjak region and Preshevo Valley, we can easily imagine what kind of pressure and insecurity the Muslims have to face in Serbia these days. In early 2017, the investigative journalism website Cenzolovka (www.cenzolovka.rs) published an analysis of the front pages of the Serbian daily papers. Some of the headlines were “Dečane Monastery Assaulted by ISIS”; “Wahhabists before the Gates of Belgrade”; “Islamists Aiming to Slaughter Serbian Priests”; “Shqiptars Are Preparing a Serbian Massacre”; “If You Want a War in Bosnia, That’s What You’re Going to Have”; “(Bosniaks) Want War and to Cut Serbian Throats”; and many more. Apart from the openly warmongering discourse, nationally oriented media and ones under Russian influence regularly publish anti-Turkish articles about a neo-Ottoman threat, while emphasizing that Turkey is actively backing and supporting Kosovo in its struggle to gain full membership in international organizations. If we bear in mind that the Serbian nationalist ideology has an extremely negative opinion about the historic period of Ottoman rule, and takes an aggressive stance on poturice, that is, Southern Slavs who converted to Islam, such discourse in the media always heats up the atmosphere, incites hostilities and calls for ethnic and religious distance from the Serbian Muslims. What’s more, there were two very important incidents that took place in 2017, namely, Ratko Mladić’s guilty verdict before the ICTY, and the demolition of a mosque in Belgrade on the eve of the month of Ramadan.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Politics

In the political arena, what should be alarming is the fact that we are seeing a total revival of political parties and forces from the 1990s. All the parties that used to be the most important players on the socio-political stage in the period of aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Kosovo conflict are presently the strongest political parties in Serbia. This fact led to a reaffirmation of nationalist pretensions, as well as hate speech against Muslims in the public sphere. Likewise, with tacit approval from the ruling power structures, there are several extremist clero-nationalist organizations and groups that are active in the political and public sphere, such as Obraz, Zavetnici, Serbian Popular Movement Naši, Serbian Popular Movement 1389, as well as the parliamentary party Serbian Movement Dveri. All aforementioned movements and organizations espouse a strong anti-Muslim narrative based on the idea that the Ottoman Turks are the archetypal Other, while Balkan Muslims stand for traitors of their forefathers’ faith, which is the reason they were subsequently ethnically cleansed on several occasions in the 20th century. In general, these organizations and groups not only deny the crimes committed during the 1990s, but even go as far as to glorify such acts. As a result of the re-establishment of such a political environment, the Serbian Muslims, who mostly come from ethnic minorities such as Bosniaks and Albanians, are seen as potential enemies. In such a context, it should be pointed out that Serbia still hasn’t managed to assume the responsibility for the genocide committed in Srebrenica, nor for the ethnic cleansing of the Kosovar Albanians and the Bosniaks in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It is absolutely necessary for the Serbian political leadership to unequivocally acknowledge and admit that the crimes perpetrated against Bosniaks in Srebrenica constitute genocide, as pointed out in the Final Report on Serbia by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI).

In 2017, there were a series of particular incidents which put a constant strain on the relation between Kosovo and Serbia, such as the arrest of Ramush Haradinaj

3. Available at http://www.obraz.rs.
4. Available at http://zavetnici.rs.
6. Available at http://www.snp1389.rs.
7. Available at https://dveri.rs.
in France on the warrant for his arrest issued by the Republic of Serbia,\textsuperscript{10} followed by the French government’s decision to refuse to extradite Haradinaj to Serbia,\textsuperscript{11} as well as a provocation by the Serbian regime in the form of the train labelled “Kosovo Is Serbia,” whose interior was painted with Christian Orthodox images, which was supposed to travel on the Belgrade-Kosovska Mitrovica railway line.\textsuperscript{12} Nevertheless, without any doubt, the most significant cause for deterioration in official relations were the parliamentary elections in Kosovo that were held in June 2017. The elections were won by Ramush Haradinaj, who has been accused by the Serbian authorities of committing war crimes against Serbian populations in the early 1990s.\textsuperscript{13} Strained political relations between Kosovo and Serbia have a huge impact on the process of integration of Albanians living in Serbia. In the territory of Prishtina and Tirana, in order to prevent the ethnic cleansing that Serbia is presently carrying out by means other than arms. In his words, the ethnic cleansing of Albanians has been almost fully carried out in Medvedja, while the ethnic structure of the population in Bujanovac has been disrupted due to “difficulties that the Albanians face in education, as well as the overall bad economic situation.”\textsuperscript{14}

Similarly, the atmosphere was heated and harsh, and tactless political statements were exchanged between Sarajevo and Belgrade. The cause for such behaviour was found in statements made by Bakir Izetbegović, who said that with the aim of defending the integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina he was ready even to wage another war,\textsuperscript{15} and also expressed his opinion that Bosnia and Herzegovina should recognize the independent Kosovo. Likewise, there was a series of extremely harsh statements


following the acquittal of Naser Orić before the State Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, who was accused of committing war crimes against Serbian prisoners of war in 1992 in the Srebrenica vicinity.

Likewise, the Roma population in Serbia is living in extremely difficult conditions. At its 72nd plenary session, the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) stated that while according to data collected from the 2011 Census of Population there are 147,604 Roma living in Serbia, in reality their number is much higher, and this figure is actually approximately 600,000. The reason for such a huge discrepancy is the fact that many Roma settlements have not been listed on the census, because according to data from the ECRI, as much as 72% of those settlements are still improvised informal housings and makeshift settlements. Likewise, the ECRI assessed that the Serbian government must invest much more in the process of Roma integration and the strengthening of their capacities. It concluded that it’s not that there are no strategies and action plans in various areas and fields, but rather that the problem is that they are not implemented and followed. The commission also pointed out that the violence against the Roma is a lasting problem, and the police are often not open to hear complaints, especially when they come from members of the Roma population.

**Justice System**

In the legal system, what is most alarming is the process of rehabilitation of the leading people from the Chetniks’ movement and a number of other individuals who were at the head of the Serbian collaborationist government during World War II. This process goes hand in hand with the aforementioned process of reaffirmation of the Serbian nationalist ideology. In 2017, the Higher Court in Valjevo rehabilitated Nikola Kalabić, Commander of the Oplenac Corps of the Yugoslav Army in the Fatherland. It is believed that Kalabić was responsible for many assassinations and killings of both civilians and members of the Partisan movement, as well as Roma. The historian Milan Radanović cites a report from 1943 that was dispatched by Kalabić to Dragoljub Draža Mihajlović as evidence which makes manifest his position during World War II. It states, “In Kopljari, 24 active communists were captured while sleeping and slaughtered, among them 20 Gypsies, who confessed they were so-called drygulchers, who do their jobs at home by day, and go into clandestine ac-

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16. European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), "Final Report on Serbia".
17. With regard to this census, it is important to point out that previous reports which tackled the issue of Islamophobia in Serbia failed to mention that the 2011 Census of Population was boycotted by Albanians from Preshevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja region, as well as a significant number of Bosniaks who followed former Sandžak Mufti Muamer Zukorlić’s call for a boycott. The Albanian boycott has significant political implications, given that in many cases, the Serbian authorities take advantage of the fact that in the Preshevo Valley only 5,809 Albanians were listed on the census, although their number is much higher, as testified by the fact that 61,647 people were listed in the 2002 Census.
18. European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), "Final Report on Serbia".
19. Ibid.
tions at night. I slaughtered them all.” 20 This case of legal rehabilitation was only the latest in a series of similar court decisions, the most glaring of which was the rehabilitation of Dragoljub Draža Mihajlović, leader of the Chetniks’ movement, back in 2015. The consequences that such court decisions might have were also highlighted by the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) in its report, which emphasized that the rehabilitation of those who were responsible for mass killings and deportation of Bosniaks, Albanians and Roma during World War II cannot possibly result in a feeling of security among the aforementioned ethnic minorities and general stability in the region. 21

In addition to the problems regarding cases of legal rehabilitation, the ECRI in its report also highlighted that the process of legal trials and the sentencing of those indicted for war crimes and genocide committed in the 1990s is progressing very slowly, while persons who are high-ranking officials are not tried at all for war crimes. Likewise, in its opinion, the document on genocide denial is rather restrictive in its definition. 22 Therefore, Serbian Muslims still live in insecurity and fear that there might be a new wave of hate crimes. In the stated report, the ECRI also underlined that the implementation of laws prohibiting hate speech is ineffective and no measures are taken against racist and hooligan groups, while according to the presently applicable Serbian laws the incitement of hate against groups living outside of Serbia is not punishable.

In addition to the ECRI report, two other significant and comprehensive surveys were carried out. These surveys about the wars in the 1990s, which were published in August and December respectively, clearly showed the extent of unawareness and lack of information among citizens about crimes committed during the wars in the 1990s, as well as the inefficiency of the Serbian public authorities in prosecuting those who are responsible. Upon the request of daily Danas, Demostat Research and Publishing Centre conducted a survey in August entitled Awareness of Serbian Citizens about the Wars in the 1990s, War Crimes and Trials of Those Indicted for War Crimes, while in December the Humanitarian Law Centre published its research entitled Initial Report on the Implementation of the National Strategy for War Crimes Prosecution. 23

Without any doubt, the most important event in 2017 was the sentencing of the former Commander of the Chief of Staff of the Army of Republic of Srpska Ratko Mladić for the genocide committed in the Srebrenica area by the International

22. Ibid.
Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Mladić was sentenced to life in prison for genocide, crimes against humanity and violations of laws and customs of war perpetrated by the Serbian forces during the armed conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, the reactions coming from the Serbian public authorities, but also from the opposition parties, were inappropriate, to say the least. They emphasized the fact that according to this verdict, the Serbian state has been amnestied for the crimes committed in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. There was no one to comment on the verdict itself passed against Ratko Mladić. All political parties save the Liberal Democratic Party gave neutral or ambivalent press releases. On the other hand, the media hailed it as a victory, so to say, for righting the wrong and the “injustice that the Hague Tribunal has been doing to the Serbian state all these years.” Needless to say, politicians coming from the extreme right-wing of the political spectrum went even further in their statements glorifying the achievements of Ratko Mladić. For instance, the leader of the parliamentary Serbian Movement Dveri, Boško Obradović, stated that “for him, Ratko Mladić and Radovan Karadžić are Serbian heroes, and should be on the front pages of every school history textbook.”24 Likewise, as an open supporter and advocate of war policies in the 1990s, the Serbian Orthodox Church remained firm in its position. Among other comments, the Serbian Patriarch Irinej said that the verdict against Ratko Mladić was the result of “powerful rulers of the world doing their devilish deeds, while we suffer the consequences.”25 The reactions of all aforementioned protagonists in the socio-political sphere and the way in which the media reported the conviction should come as no surprise as they are a consequence of the fact highlighted at the very beginning of this report, namely that there is a systematic reaffirmation of the Serbian nationalist ideology which, starting in the 19th century until the present day, has been promoting strong expansionist ideas and narratives of confrontation with other nationalities in the Balkans.

**Employment**

With regard to employment, ethnic minorities have been persistently facing problems for many decades. According to data published in 2015 by the Serbian public authorities, the unemployment rate is 17.7%. However, although no official information is available, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) stated that according to their knowledge, in the regions with predominantly Muslim population, such as Sandžak and the Preshevo Valley, the unemployment rate is as high as 70%. Moreover, there is not a single member from the Roma ethnic minority in major bodies in public administration and services, which also

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24. Boško Obradović’s statement is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tQ18CdffKS8.
have very low level of representation of members of other Muslim minorities. In addition, at the press conference entitled “Roma Women in Serbia – Achievements, Challenges and Perspectives,” which took place in Belgrade, it was emphasized that there is enormous discrimination against Roma women, who live in extremely difficult conditions. On that occasion, Deputy Protector of Citizens Gordana Stevanović particularly shed light on and stressed that field work, carried out in Roma makeshift settlements, show that Roma women do not trust the state and its system, which makes the process of their integration even more difficult.

**Education**

In the field of education, Muslim ethnic minorities face significant problems. Bosniak and Albanian communities constantly deal with problems regarding textbooks for primary and secondary schools in their native languages. In addition, there are significant problems when forming classes at schools in cases when the entire education is carried out in Bosnian and Albanian languages. Furthermore, Islamic religious education in schools is another issue which is a huge problem that persists ever since it was introduced back in 2001. According to statements made by representatives of the Islamic Community of Serbia, there is systematic discrimination against Muslims, as well as an entire range of practices which hinder and obstruct the implementation of the law on religious education for Muslim children. However, it is the members of the Roma population who face the greatest problems of all. According to data provided by the ECRI, only 6% of Roma children enrol in preschool and nursery schools, while 46% of them complete mandatory primary school education, and a meager 13% attend secondary schools, with boys twice as many as girls.

Also worth mentioning is the long-standing problem of the distorted representation of the Ottoman period and the depiction of the basics of Islamic faith and culture in general in history textbooks for elementary schools in the Serbian language.

Finally, in the context of education, we should pay attention to another incident. The case in question was a lecture given at the Military Academy in Belgrade by Vladimir Lazarević, retired colonel general of the Third Corps of the Yugoslav Army and former commander of the Prishtina Corps, who was convicted of war crimes before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). This incident provoked strong reactions from Federica Mogherini, high representative of

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the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, as well as non-governmental organizations and several opposition leaders who stated that it is unacceptable that a man convicted of war crimes gives lectures to future soldiers.  

Media  

There is no doubt that Serbian media are the biggest generator of hate speech and the source that motivates hate toward the other. The best evidence for this can be found in the aforementioned research carried out by Cenzolovka, a website dedicated to investigative journalism, which was already mentioned in the introductory part of this report. Those headlines speak for themselves and bear sufficient testimony to the creation of an atmosphere of hate. The tabloid Informer is the newspaper that definitely has the leading role in the creation of such an atmosphere, but also many other daily newspapers do the same. Regarding the Informer, the tabloid is considered to be a pro-government newspaper that is an additional reason to worry and fear.

Examples of front pages of daily newspapers in Serbia can be found in Figures 1-6.
Figure 3: The daily Kurir: “Bakir Spat on the dill with Serbia; 300 Jihadists Came Back to the Region.” 33

Figure 4: Informer: “Erdogan Is Preparing Rama and Thaci for War!” 34

Figure 5: Srpski Telegraf: “Erdogan Is Giving Airplanes to Thaci to Exterminate Serbs.” 35

Figure 6: Informer: “(Ramush Haradinaj) We Will Slaughter Serbian Children.” 36


In its report, the ECRI also highlighted this problem, pointing this out as one of its key findings.³⁷ Hate speech observable in public discourse is blatant and primarily directed against minority groups, resorting to ultranationalist commonplaces, which, in turn, result in pervasive fear and the feeling among Serbian Muslims that they are being discriminated against. Hate speech also leads to the growing insecurity in the entire region. The ECRI also stated that the hate speech which is presently evident in the media brings back memories of the discourse used on the eve of the wars in the 1990s, which paved the way for subsequent ethnic cleansings and genocide.³⁸ The best evidence for this can be found in public surveys which for many years now show that there is a large ethnic distance separating Serbian Muslims from the dominant majority population. However, apart from such openly warmongering discourse, there is another issue that is blatantly apparent in the media: the strong feeling of anti-Turkism. (Figs. 4 and 5) Nationally oriented media and those under Russian influence, such as Sputnik and Vostok, have the leading role in the circulation of such contents and regularly publish anti-Turkish articles about the supposed neo-Ottoman threat.³⁹

**Physical and Verbal Attacks**

Without any doubt, the most significant incident that happened in 2017 was the demolition of the mosque in the Zemun Polje neighborhood in Belgrade, which took place during Jumu‘ah, just before the Ramadan fasting period. The mosque was torn down by fully armed members of the Special Operations Unit of the Serbian Police Forces.⁴⁰ What’s more, the mosque in Zemun Polje is a congregational place mostly for members of the Roma and Ashkali population, who are the most vulnerable communities. However, they had still managed to gather funds on their own to build a mosque in their neighborhood. As the reason for the destruction of the mosque, the city authorities stated that it lacked the necessary building permission. However, further investigation revealed that the vast majority of the existing buildings in Zemun Polje lack building permissions, a fact that makes it evident that the city authorities have double standards. In this context, it is important to emphasize that, as pointed out by the Belgrade Mufti Mustafa Jusufspahić, the Islamic Community of Serbia has not been given a single permission to construct its buildings (not only mosques) in the past 47

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³⁸. Ibid.
⁴⁰. A video of the demolition of the mosque in Zemun Polje is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=amcWxggjGZo.
years.\footnote{A statement of the Belgrade Mufti Mustafa Jusufspahić is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eb4ZRJhDens} In addition to the destruction of the mosque, there was another incident, the latest in a long series of disturbances provoked by football hooligans at stadium terraces. On July 11, the day of the annual commemoration of the Srebrenica genocide, Belgrade’s football club Partizan played a qualifier for the UEFA Champions League against FC Budućnost from Podgorica, Montenegro. During the match, FC Partizan fans, dubbed Grobari (Gravediggers), cheered in support of General Ratko Mladić, who was convicted of the genocide committed against the Bosniak population in Srebrenica. In a similar vein, Partizan fans also called the opponent players by derogatory names, calling them Shqiptars.\footnote{Info-ks website, “Beograd: Grobari skandiralı Ratku Mladiću, a podgoričanima vikali “Šiptari””, info-ks.net (July 12, 2017), retrieved January 14, 2018, from http://www.info-ks.net/vijesti/regija/80343/beograd-grobari-skandirali-ratku-mladicu-a-podgoricanima-vikali-siptari-video.} Similarly, in the football match that Novi Pazar FC played against Budućnost FC from Dobanovci, currently in the second tier of Serbia’s football league, home fans cheered in approval of the genocide perpetrated in Srebrenica.

There were two other incidents worth mentioning. The first relates to racist graffiti in the city of Kragujevac targeting Roma. “A knife in the neck of Roma,” was written.\footnote{Danas, “Osudili rasističke grafite”, danas.rs (November 13, 2017), retrieved January 14, 2018, from http://www.danas.rs/drustvo.55.html?news_id=362091&title=Osudili+rasistickie+grafite.} The second incident occurred in the city of Niš during the screening of the documentary movie \textit{Albanke su naše sestre} (Albanian Women Are Our Sisters).\footnote{Blic,”Incident na projekciji filma „Albanke su naše sestre”“, blic.rs (June 22, 2017), retrieved January 14, 2018, from https://www.blic.rs/vesti/srbija/incident-na-projekciji-filma-albanke-su-nase-sestre-u-nisu/4kw1lxh.}  

\textbf{Internet}

At the moment, the Internet is the sphere where hate speech is most prominently displayed. In recent years, we have seen a plethora of websites, Facebook pages and YouTube channels such as Nationalist,\footnote{Available at http://www.nacionalist.rs.} Patriot,\footnote{Available at http://patriot.rs.} Vidovdan,\footnote{Available at https://www.facebook.com/SrpskaCast.rs/.} Serbian Honour,\footnote{Balkan Info’s official YouTube channel has 70,000 subscribers. Available at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLG5Qu54Q7gwGeD5etuQ} Balkan Info\footnote{Available at http://sputnik.rs.} and many more that are popping up and spreading hate and hostility against Muslims. In addition to the aforementioned websites, there are media outlets, which are openly funded by Russia, such as Sputnik\footnote{Available at http://sputnik.rs.} and Vostok,\footnote{Available at http://www.vostok.rs.} which constantly and conspicuously publish articles that only exacerbate the Kosovo-Serbia conflict and stir up the irredentist plans of the Bosnian Serbs.
Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

The ruling coalition should be considered the most responsible for Serbia’s current situation. Apart from the fact that it does little to suppress hate speech, it is evident that the pro-regime media, as well as ultranationalist groups and organizations with which the ruling political parties share close ties, such as the 1389 Movement, the Serbian Popular Movement Naši, Obraz and many others, enjoy tacit support and approval by the government to carry out their actions which spread and incite national, ethnic and religious hostilities and hatred.

Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

In Serbia there are no NGOs or any initiatives dedicated to the suppression and monitoring of hate and hostilities against Muslims.52

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

We are currently witnessing a process of reaffirmation of all the parties and personalities that, over the past thirty years, have been either ideologues or executors of the Serbian policies directly responsible for the wars in the 1990s. In such an atmosphere, the conditions of the Muslim population are far from satisfactory. It is therefore only natural to ask what Serbian Muslims can expect in the future and how will the general political situation be reflected onto their position. We can say that, following the October 5 overthrow of Milošević’s regime and the ensuing democratic changes from 2000, what we are now seeing is a sort of counter-revolution. The progress made in the socio-political sphere and in the field of adoption of various sets of laws that went in conjunction with Serbia’s process of European integration is now increasingly questioned and remains a moot point. The existing laws are most often not implemented, while Muslims, in particular Albanians, still feel as second-class citizens. However, as the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) stated in its report, it is the Roma who are in the worst position. The Roma population has to cope with extreme poverty, low level of education, and deep-rooted prejudices against them.53 Systematic, institutional discrimination against Bosniaks, Albanians and Roma which goes hand in hand with the revival of

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52. In this report we didn’t deal with the problem of the Islamic Community because of the limited space. The problem of the Islamic Community is an extremely serious legal issue which has lasted for decades now. The government is exploiting the division inside the Islamic Community. One of the main reasons for this is that as long as the Islamic Community is divided the government doesn’t have to follow through with the restitution of the Islamic Communities’ properties.

53. We don’t have the exact percentage of Roma who are Muslim. There are opinions that have more than half of the Roma population professing to the Islamic religion. Unfortunately, as was stated at the beginning of the report, the problem with the Roma population is that they mainly live in informal settlements. In most cases, they don’t own personal documents and therefore it is impossible to identify the exact number of Roma living in Serbia. The last census in 2011 showed that 147,604 Roma are living in Serbia. In reality, their number is much higher - approximately 600,000.
far-right forces and warmongering media reporting packed with hate speech surely cannot lead to any improvement.

At this moment, any specific recommendations must be focused on the strengthening of the civil society and civic initiatives which could provide counter-narratives to the exclusivist and nationalist mainstream policies in Serbia. Furthermore, steps should be taken in order to establish non-governmental organizations and initiatives that would specialize on Islamophobia issues so as to monitor and provide concrete support and answers to hate speech and biased policies directed against Muslims.

Likewise, it is of equal importance to help in the establishment of alternative media sources of information. In the first place, this goes for the online sphere, as the latest surveys show that more than 90% of young people have accounts on social networks and they use the Internet to inform themselves on socio-political questions.

**Chronology**

- **14.01.2017**: Provocation by the Serbian regime in the form of the train labelled “Kosovo Is Serbia,” whose interior was painted with Christian Orthodox images, which was supposed to travel on the Belgrade-Kosovska Mitrovica railway line.
- **26.05.2017**: Demolition of the mosque in the Zemun Polje neighbourhood in Belgrade.
- **22.11.2017**: Ratko Mladić sentenced for the genocide committed in the Srebrenica area. Mladić was sentenced to life in prison for genocide, crimes against humanity and violations of laws and customs of war perpetrated by the Serbian forces during the armed conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
This is the third issue of the annual European Islamophobia Report (EIR) consisting of an overall evaluation of Islamophobia in Europe in the year 2017, as well as 33 country reports which include almost all EU member states and additional countries such as Russia and Norway. This year’s EIR represents the work of 40 prominent scholars and civil society activists from various European countries.

The denial of the very existence of Islamophobia/anti-Muslim racism/anti-Muslim hate crime in Europe by many demonstrates the need for an appropriate effort and political will to tackle this normalized racism and its manifestations that are deeply entrenched in European societies, institutions, and states.

This denial is not only the case for extremist groups on the political fringe of the society, but rather far-right discourses have moved to the center of political power. Consequently, it is not only right-wing extremist groups that rely on the means of Islamophobic propaganda and discourse - social democrats, liberals, leftists or conservatives are not immune to this form of racism.

As a survey published by the FRA reveals 76% of Muslim respondents feel strongly attached to the country they live in, while 31% of those seeking work have been discriminated against in the last five years. At the same time, only 12% of Muslims say they have reported cases of discrimination. Hence, we can say with certainty that the extent of discrimination Muslims face in Europe is much greater than the numbers revealed in any report on Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime in Europe.

In other words, one can claim that all the available data and statistics about Islamophobia in Europe show only the tip of the iceberg. Therefore, revealing the comprehensiveness of structural anti-Muslim racism lies at the heart of the European Islamophobia Report project, which on a yearly basis analyzes the trends and developments in Europe from Russia to Portugal, and Malta to Norway.

About SETA

Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA) is a non-profit research institute based in Turkey dedicated to innovative studies on national, regional and international issues. SETA is the leading think tank in Turkey and has offices in Ankara, Istanbul, Washington D.C., and Cairo. The objective of SETA is to produce up-to-date and accurate knowledge and analyses in the fields of politics, economy, and society, and inform policy makers and the public on changing political, economic, social, and cultural conditions. Through research reports, publications, brain storming sessions, conferences and policy recommendations, SETA seeks to guide leaders in government, civil society, and business, and contributes to informed decision making mechanisms.